DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 772 EC 303 671

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TITLE Iowa Behavioral Initiative Concept Paper.
INSTITUTION Iowa State Dept. of Education, Des Moines. Bureau of Special Education.; Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, Des Moines, IA.
PUB DATE Sep 94
NOTE 37p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Development; *Behavior Problems; *Change Strategies; *Classroom Techniques; Discipline; Educational Objectives; *Educational Philosophy; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Staff Development; State Programs; *Student Behavior
IDENTIFIERS *Iowa

ABSTRACT

The Iowa Behavioral Initiative is a staff development venture designed to help educators with the increasingly complex student behaviors which seem to defy former standards of intervention. Participation in the Initiative activities provides general and special educators with practical, validated strategies for dealing with student behavior problems. This booklet examines what is known about challenging behaviors and discusses issues and concerns in serving students with behavioral problems. An educational philosophy is presented, emphasizing Iowa's commitment to ensuring the social, emotional, and behavioral preparedness of all students. Beliefs supporting this philosophy are outlined, such as achieving student discipline through instruction rather than coercion, focusing on prevention and early intervention, and viewing the child as part of a family with complex needs and strengths. Attitudes, skills, and systems most likely to lead to student behavioral success and a positive school climate are spelled out. The mission and goals of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative are presented, and each of the five components is discussed: (1) the Behavioral Teams Academy, (2) the Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network, (3) the Interagency Cadre, (4) demonstration sites, and (5) information dissemination. (Contains 17 references.) (JDD)

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Iowa Behavioral Initiative
CONCEPT PAPER

Building the capacity of Iowa schools to ensure that all students leave public education with social competence

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A comprehensive initiative for staff development by the Iowa Department of Education on behalf of all Iowa students

September 1994

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Iowa Behavioral Initiative

CONCEPT PAPER

September, 1994

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Preface

While the state can be proud of the educational programs and services it provides to students with disabilities, student behavior problems are a primary concern of today's educators—both special and general educators alike.

The *Iowa Behavioral Initiative* (IBI), a comprehensive staff development venture which has taken shape over the past three years, is now conducting activities designed to help educators with the increasingly complex student behaviors which seem to defy former standards of intervention. Participation in the Initiative activities provides general and special educators with practical, validated strategies for dealing with student behavior.

The planning behind these opportunities has involved many groups working together for an extended period of time. In 1989, a statewide behavioral disorders *Futures Conference* and the subsequent *BD Steering Committee* provided early impetus for this initiative. Since that time many other individuals and groups have played a significant role in shaping what is now known as the *Iowa Behavioral Initiative:*

The State Board of Education and Department of Education are supportive of this effort. The current strategic plan recognizes the need to address student behavior problems in our schools.

The Bureau of Special Education of the Department of Education has a staff representing instructional and support services. They provided input on the initial conceptualization of the IBI, and continue to participate broadly in planning and conducting activities.

The AEA Directors of Special Education provided reactions and input into the initial design of the Initiative and receive periodic updates on activities. The directors work with their AEAs and LEAs in exploring possibilities for educator involvement.

The IBI Steering Committee, a group of approximately fifteen individuals representing the AEAs, the Bureau of Special Education, Education Services for Children, Families, and Communities, the Parent-Educator Connection, and Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, assisted with the broad conceptualization of the *Iowa Behavioral Initiative*. This committee met numerous times during 1992-1993 to generate beliefs, a vision, goals, and functions for the Initiative.

Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center commissioned multiple data-gathering activities designed to compile existing information from child-count data. The center also conducted case reviews and interviews to determine service patterns and needs, and directed a national search to locate other successful state efforts.

IBI Focus Groups provided the representation of eleven groups of concerned stakeholders from across the state. These groups included general and special education teachers, early childhood educators, institutional educators, school administrators and counselors, support service providers, parents, and students. These focus groups generated ideas about needed and ideal services.

The Parent-Educator Connection, which includes one or more parents and an educator from each AEA, received informational presentations and were given opportunities for input from the parent perspective.

School-based practitioners in special and general education who participated in overview presentations offered their issues, concerns, as well as reactions to the proposed initiative activities.

The IBI Leadership Team, composed of Department of Education leadership and a core planning team, provided the wisdom for the Initiative to take practical form and continues to guide and direct the Initiative's activities. Representation includes Special Education, Instructional Services, and School Administration and Accreditation Bureau Chiefs, key special education staff, and the project director.

The many efforts of all these individuals—too many to list—contributed to the formation of this initiative with its beliefs and desires and the activities to begin to make them a reality.

Why a Behavioral Initiative?

What We Know

The interest in improving the quality of education and ensuring that all Iowa students meet very high standards may never be stronger than it is today. However, the major focus of educational reform has been the improvement of student *academic* performance. While a high level of academic achievement remains a primary goal of education, there can be little disagreement that student social, emotional, and behavioral problems often present barriers to achieving that goal.

For more than twenty years the *Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools* has identified "lack of discipline" as the most serious problem facing our educational system. School personnel, students, parents, and lawmakers are all calling for solutions to the increasing incidence of insubordination, aggression toward peers and teachers, truancy, drug use, and destruction of property which lead to more than two million suspensions each year (*Harvard Education Letter*, 1988). In addition, classrooms are plagued by other more minor misbehaviors that, while they don't result in suspension, disrupt student learning. Approximately one-half of classroom time is taken up with non-instructional activities, and discipline problems are responsible for a significant portion of this lost instructional time (Cotton, 1990).

While educators are concerned that student behavior problems impede achievement of academic goals, they are beginning to realize that accountability for student social, emotional, and behavioral development is equally valid. G.D. Borich, writing in 1971, advanced the position that social-emotional development may have more impact

than cognitive development on determining success or failure, adaptation or maladaptation in school as well as society at large. Certainly school is the primary place where socialization occurs for children. Yet historically this critical function has not been addressed directly or systematically by schools, and there is little evidence to suggest that personal and social competence is an automatic by-product of the school experience.

This attention to student social, emotional, and behavioral development has, in part, been fueled by dismal reports of post-school results. Twenty-five percent of all students leave school before graduating. This drop-out rate has been linked with behavioral issues such as social skills deficits, absenteeism or suspensions, and feelings of disconnectedness (Gresham, 1981; Wagner, 1991). Students with more serious behavioral difficulties are often "encouraged" by school administrators to drop out. For students served in special education programs by virtue of their behavior, over half do not complete school. Follow-up studies on this group as well as others who leave school indicate low employment rates, involvement in illegal behavior, social isolation, and overall poor quality of life (Edgar, 1985; Fardig, Algozzine, Schartz, Hensel, & Westling, 1985; SRI International, 1992).

Changing demographics are also forcing schools to take a new look at how to better provide for the complex behavioral needs of students. The number of children likely to need special behavioral interventions is increasing as the effects of childhood poverty, drug use, abuse and neglect are evident in the population data. In 1987 more than 21 percent of Iowa's children were living in poverty. Twenty percent of our children live in single parent homes, and half of those require public assistance *(World Class Futures)*. Twenty percent of youth ages 12-17 claim to have used illicit drugs (OERI, 1992).

Presently less than one percent of students are identified as behaviorally disordered and receive special education services under the provisions of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). It is estimated that we are not meeting the needs of an additional two to three percent of our students who are experiencing significant emotional and behavioral problems and subsequent school failure. This does not include the three to five percent of students with attention deficit disorder or other emerging conditions who may also experience behavioral difficulties and often fall through the cracks of existing services.

While not all of these students who exhibit challenging behaviors are eligible for special education

services, they may need some type of support in order to profit from their education and to enable other students to achieve full benefits from their school experience. Some of these students may be protected by *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act* which provides assurances similar to IDEA (Rose, 1988).

It is becoming more obvious that schools have a shared responsibility for the development of students who are personally and socially ready to participate as productive citizens in society. National priorities are calling for a "reorientation in the way schools address the diverse and complex patterns of psychological and social behavior presented by our students," both to facilitate academic achievement and to ensure life preparedness (*Federal Register*, 1992).

The Issues and Concerns

While Iowa has always been on the cutting edge in identifying and serving students with behavioral disorders, children with social, emotional, and behavioral problems still remain underidentified and underserved in our schools and communities. Many would cite lack of resources or staff as a primary cause. Some would suggest that colleges and universities fail to prepare educators for their challenging role in meeting student emotional and behavioral needs. Still others suggest that for many educators there appears to be a lack of *commitment to* or a vision of *how to* work effectively with students who are troubled and troublesome.

Too often schools do not provide any specific educational experiences that explicitly promote the personal and social development of *all* students. Some educators still hold to a traditional orientation that the sole responsibility for personal and social development of students rests with parents and other agencies, *not* the school. They perceive the school role as one of merely controlling or managing behavior that interferes with learning. This view emphasizes rules, punishment, and the exclusion of disruptive students from the instructional setting.

Typically, prevention activities or early intervention are neither promoted nor funded in our schools. Few districts have a process for screening and identifying students at-risk for school failure and/or emotional and behavioral problems. Students often must experience serious problems to be brought to the attention of school teams. Professionals may then have difficulty or lack confidence in their ability to conduct meaningful behavioral assessments and interpret definitions and criteria that enable students to receive services. The extensive and costly formal assessment process may impede more

practical problem-solving strategies and the provision of early and short-term support services.

While the absence of screening procedures and the inexactness of assessment and eligibility criteria may deter identification, staff uncertainty of *how* to respond to increasingly severe and more aggressive student behavior may result in a hesitancy to identify disruptive students. Restriction on the use of exclusion with identified students is viewed as tying educators' hands. The troublesome behavior may conveniently be considered a conduct problem, and the school's disciplinary responses serve as a catalyst for the student to leave school.

Specialized interventions, when offered, tend to be limited and reactive in nature, implemented only following chronic reoccurrence of problems (e.g., course failure or repeated truancy and behavioral incidents). Even special education has traditionally required that a student must first fail before referral and placement.

Once a student has been identified for special education, a primary concern is the match between student needs and appropriate services. While "least restrictive environment" suggests a preference for serving students in the regular classroom, most students identified as behaviorally disordered are served in relatively restrictive environments. This continues, in part, because many educators lack the confidence and knowledge about effective behavioral and instructional strategies to serve these difficult students in less restrictive educational settings.

Even within our special education programs, interventions are often limited. Provisions for student interpersonal needs appear to be second to a focus on suppressing "bad" or maladaptive behaviors. This emphasis on behavior management seeks largely to maintain control, and does not teach students appropriate behaviors or how to better manage their anger, sadness, or impulses, and take responsibility for changing their own behavior. Academic instruction often lacks relevancy and interest for students as well. Teachers serving students with behavioral difficulties are often isolated and have limited opportunities for professional exchange on validated strategies, materials, and programs for providing this positively oriented curricula.

Another deterrent to effectively meeting student personal and social needs is limited home, school and interagency collaboration. When student problems at school are linked to problems in the home or community, or when problems are more complex, schools alone do not have the resources to intervene. Multiple public and private agencies currently exist with at

least partial mandates to serve children with behavioral problems. However, collaboration and coordination of school, family, social services, mental health, and other community resources is often bogged down in disagreements over roles, responsibilities, and funding. Eligibility and availability of funds often determine services rather than the child's needs. Even when services are available, lack of functional communication and coordination between agencies may compromise the effectiveness of the interventions. Duplication of services can occur, or interventions may be "at odds" with each other.

Without creating new ways of providing services to students, Iowa schools will continue to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the needs of troubled and troubling students, and these youths and their families will continue to be inadequately served.

These issues and concerns in educating Iowa students experiencing behavioral difficulties were identified in activities conducted with general and special educators, related service providers, advocates, students, parents, and families during 1993-94. Through these activities—a review of child count data and various studies, telephone interviews, site visits, meetings, and focus groups—perceived problems surfaced, were discussed, compared, and validated. The identified issues cross the entire continuum of school service options from the regular classroom to highly specialized services or programs. These concerns have been summarized and organized along the full continuum in Figure 1.

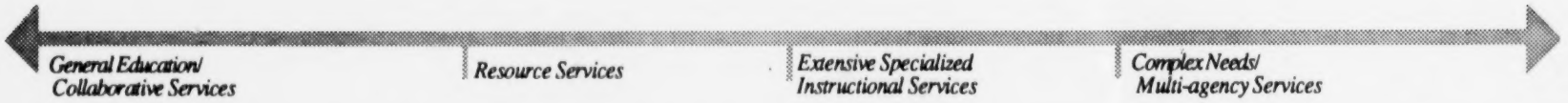
Identifying the problems—what we are currently doing or not doing—in meeting the personal and social needs of our students serves to stimulate discussion and self-assessment. It focuses the change efforts of those who are interested in improving results for this group of students that present some of the biggest challenges to our educational system. These are the issues and concerns being addressed by the *Iowa Behavioral Initiative.*

What We Believe

Education should not and cannot be for the select few who have come to us from environments which helped them become not only academically inclined, but also socially acceptable to peers and adults. If we are to achieve the high standards of education reform we need to evaluate and change our beliefs about students who are behaviorally challenging. We need to invest in the development of systematic and proactive curricula, instruction, and services, as well as a staff with a commitment to ensuring the social, emotional, and behavioral preparedness of *all* our students.

Figure 1

Issues and Concerns in Educating Students With Behavioral Difficulties



- Lack of a common conceptualization and program orientation for working effectively with student behavior problems.
- Lack of schoolwide commitment to meeting student social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Increased severity of behavioral difficulties; increased violence and aggression.
- No systematic approach to achieving social and behavioral outcomes for *all* students.
- Limited knowledge of non-aversive responses to behavior problems; Lack of positive and proactive curricula.
- Limited home-school collaboration.
- High rates of suspension or expulsion.
- Ineffective/dual discipline policies.
- Uncertainty of assessment procedures.
- Limited access to screening, early and specialized interventions.
- Lack of information regarding validated strategies, materials, and programs.
- Low graduation rates for BD students; limited post-school success.
- Restricted communication and professional exchange among BD teachers.
- Overidentification of minorities.
- Focus on behavioral control rather than interpersonal skills.
- Students often served in restrictive settings.
- Limited availability of staff with expertise in interventions for severe behavior problems.
- Lack of cross-agency/community collaboration in case management and service provision.

"Children with behavioral problems are our most difficult group of students, We don't know what to do and we need to begin somewhere!"

The following beliefs were generated by the IBI Steering Committee and validated by the various individuals and groups contributing to the planning process.

The education of the total child includes a balanced focus on both academic and social achievement.

If our goal is for Iowa students to be top performers—students who are well-prepared for work, citizenship, and advanced education—then personal and social competence is a legitimate school task. All who are concerned about our children's education need to recognize that behavioral competence contributes significantly to student success, and therefore is worthy of an equal commitment of time and resources.

School has an important role in developing the personal and social competence of students as it is the one institution touching the lives of all children.

School is a common and consistent experience in the lives of children and their families and the primary place where socialization occurs. Schools have many caring professionals and the mandate to serve. As the only mandatory service provider, we should accept a shared responsibility, along with parents, for students who are not only academically literate but personally and socially developed.

Student discipline is best achieved through instruction rather than coercion; desirable student behaviors are best taught in a planful, proactive, and systematic manner.

As we seek to develop a more inclusive educational system which meets the needs of all students, our policies and interventions in regard to discipline need to be examined. We can no longer use punitive responses to problem behaviors which exclude students from the one environment that may allow them to learn the behaviors and attitudes necessary for their success. Teaching students to be successful and behave responsibly requires us to view behavior in much the same way we view academics. This includes defining desirable behaviors for student success and creating systematic learning opportunities to achieve them. When social errors occur, the misbehavior becomes an opportunity to teach, not punish.

Services should focus on prevention and early intervention.

Schools that provide for prevention and early intervention services show promise in creating conditions under which the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of almost all students can be met, and thereby reduce the need for special education services. When educators examine and amend practices which may be contributing to the "pushing

out" of students we create an invitational and child-centered climate which prevents school failure. This proactive approach allows us to create environments that promote personal and social success rather than waiting until failure occurs to provide specialized interventions.

Services for students with behavioral disorders are best provided within the context of a larger building-wide commitment to the social, emotional, and behavioral development of all students.

Specialized instructional programs for students with behavioral disorders are most effective when they are a part of a whole-school effort to ensure student mental health. The joint efforts of special educators and general educators can create a positive environment with a seamless set of proactive prevention and intervention alternatives that bring the services to the student rather than the student to the services. When schools contribute to meeting the more complex needs of students with behavioral disorders, the capability to deal with *all* students is increased.

The creation of a positive climate capable of meeting the behavioral needs of students begins with a strong instructional leader and the care and concern of a professional staff.

Strong leadership and a positive school climate are necessary to support teacher efforts that lead to improved student behavior. The instructional leader should set high expectations for student behavioral success, and model the attitudes and behaviors that lead to that success. A common belief by school staff that behavior is learned and can and *should* be taught is the foundation for a positive school climate. Educators need to change from anger, frustration, and punishment in response to challenging behaviors, to care, concern and the provision of positively oriented interventions. A capacity for nurturing comes from this attitude; it empowers staff and develops a sense of "can do."

There are no social, emotional, or behavioral problems that the school, family, and community together cannot handle.

The place of choice for a child with behavioral difficulties to receive assistance is within his or her personal environment of home, school, and community by those committed to the child's long-term care. Yet none of us, alone, holds the knowledge, skills, or resources to address the sometimes complex behavioral challenges students present. The most effective and lasting interventions are likely to occur when the efforts of the local school, the family, and agencies are combined. When we create and integrate comprehensive services

for students in the community we achieve the goal of successfully keeping the child in the best environment of care.

The child is a part of a family with complex needs and strengths. Parents, families, and schools should be partners in planning for students.

Children with behavioral difficulties come from a broad spectrum of families with a variety of strengths and needs. Schools should focus on the priorities of families and their inherent strengths rather than on their traumas, troubles, and pathologies. The family provides the first and primary educational environment for children. Parents should be viewed as full team members and experts regarding their child. Schools should work to empower and support parents, helping them to serve in partnerships with schools and community agencies.

Since success for our students will depend, at least in part, on their achieving personal and social competence, *educators should uphold their part of a new social compact.* Schools should planfully do everything in their power to ensure that all students achieve not only academically, but also behaviorally. Educators should be held accountable for student social, emotional, and behavioral growth. But educators alone cannot do the job. Families must do their part. Communities must also support educators and families with their resources and services. Schools can, however, provide the leadership to help make it possible for *all* students to succeed.

What We Want to Achieve

Meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students is a complex act. No single factor or characteristic can explain the qualities of an effective service, program, or school. There is, however, a growing body of knowledge and experience available on school-based approaches that seem to effectively address many student behavioral needs. While continued research is needed to address critical questions in many areas of practice, schools would be improved if the strategies known to be effective were implemented conscientiously.

The following describes the *attitudes, skills,* and *systems* most likely to lead to student behavioral success and a positive school climate.

Attitudes

Effective programs and schools:

- Have an unconditionally positive regard for students.

Creating a positive school climate begins with a commitment to reaching *all* students. Effective schools value all students, including those who by virtue of their behavior are troublesome. They dignify students—even those who exhibit offensive or unacceptable behaviors—by seeing beyond the problematic behaviors, recognizing student uniqueness, and focusing on strengths. Their goal becomes keeping all students in school where they can continue to learn and grow both academically and behaviorally.

- Maintain a positive and proactive focus.

Effective schools believe that appropriate student behavior is best achieved and maintained through positive approaches. They avoid negative policies which emphasize adversarial relationships and often result in mutual resentment and exclusionary practices. They believe that social behavior is learned and therefore can be taught. They openly accept this proactive role of teaching social competence and realize that it is far easier and better to build adaptive behaviors through positive educative approaches than it is to decrease maladaptive behaviors through negative responses.

- Assert beliefs of responsibility and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy refers to a teacher's personal sense of competence in producing positive changes in student behavior, as well as a strong belief that good teaching can have an impact on student performance regardless of student background of ability. Effective teachers see themselves as responsible for student success. These teachers do not perceive misbehavior as intentional or threatening to their authority. Misbehavior is merely an opportunity to teach the child a skill he or she does not have. They perceive their students as teachable and worthy of their attention and efforts regardless of the presenting problems or slow progress. Teachers' success in the classroom increases self-efficacy which in turn makes them more likely to succeed.

- Affirm high, success-oriented student expectations.

Closely related to belief in efficacy is a teacher's belief that all students can master basic social, behavioral, and academic objectives. A significant positive correlation exists between program effectiveness and high expectations for appropriate behaviors along with low tolerance for misbehavior. Unfortunately, educators often raise tolerances and lower their expectations for students who present chronic or challenging behaviors. The ability to hold and impart high expectations is difficult without a sense of self-efficacy and a repertoire of positive

interventions and strategies that focus on teaching alternative appropriate behaviors.

Successful programs and teachers continually communicate high expectations to students and actively teach students to behave in accordance with those expectations through their encouragement and support. These teachers also emphasize to students the close relationship between their personal effort and outcomes.

Skills

Effective programs and schools:

- Match instruction and services to individual student needs.

Successful programs address the specific problems of the student at the level required by the severity of the problem. In these programs student needs determine the interventions, services, or program, not the disability label or category. Selected interventions are well matched to the unique presenting problems of the student. A student whose primary difficulty is getting along with others may require instruction in social skills only, while a student with severe behavior problems requires a powerful intervention program involving a multicomponent approach. Moreover, effective programs address the relevant components of the student's entire ecology rather than being confined to the school setting.

- Employ a proactive curricula.

Many behavioral practices are largely designed to maintain control in the classroom, not to teach students how to better manage their anger, sadness, or impulses. Effective programs for students with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties define desired positive student behaviors and create learning opportunities to achieve them. They do not rely on reactive responses that seek merely to suppress undesirable behavior and control students. Instead they focus on learning opportunities that enable students to acquire positive social skills and take responsibility for changing their own behavior.

- Use validated instructional strategies.

The relationship between teacher behavior and student achievement has been emphasized in recent years through the effective schools literature. Also widely accepted is the positive relationship between effective instruction and appropriate student behavior. Yet criticism has been leveled that programs for students with behavioral disorders often have inappropriate academic curricula and poor lesson design and employ limited and sometimes ineffective instructional strategies. Successful programs for students with behavior problems should include a solid foundation of successful instructional practices—a preplanned and

enriched curriculum, clearly defined learner outcomes, clear and focused lesson delivery, a high rate of student engaged time, and ongoing progress monitoring—which have been demonstrated through empirical research to be effective.

- Provide systematic data-based interventions.

Offering a variety of school-based behavioral interventions is essential to meet varied and unique student needs. Perhaps even more important than the breadth of interventions is the systematic and consistent application of those interventions. Effective programs realize that there are no "one shot cures" and implement selected strategies carefully over an extended period of time.

This commitment to sustained intervention efforts requires monitoring of student progress and making effective decisions about continuing or modifying these interventions. Effective teachers also keep students informed about their behavioral progress.

Systematic interventions also include opportunities for practice of new skills through modeling, rehearsal, and guided practice. Effective educators realize that success is measured by the extent that behavioral improvement generalizes to other settings and people. If gains achieved during interventions are to be transferred to new situations and maintained, effective programs must include strategies for these ends.

- Are supported by strong leaders.

Research points to a single most important element in school climate—the leadership provided by the building administrator. How a school is run gives messages about what is important. When principals believe that students can and will master basic social competencies and create an organizational structure and climate to enhance student behavioral success, students and teachers feel they are effective. Effective school leaders build a positive school climate by setting expectations for success, modeling this emphasis on appropriate student behavior, generating consensus on disciplinary policies and procedures, and using feedback to reinforce the school's positive behavioral emphasis.

Systems

Effective programs and schools:

- Provide an array of services.

Students with social, emotional, and behavioral problems have multiple needs and require multi-component treatment. These needs may involve special interventions such as social skills instruction, teaching anger control, counseling, family support, or parent training. Effective programs provide a compre-

hensive array of services to meet varied individual student needs. They realize that the *additive* effects of various school-based interventions and related treatments are critical to successful long term student success.

- Engage parents.

Research demonstrates that parent involvement is directly related to positive student learning, behavior, and attitudes. Research also shows that such involvement is especially beneficial for students with behavioral disorders who may otherwise feel torn between differing expectations and values represented by the home and the school. Many students who have significant behavioral problems at school also display maladaptive behavior in their homes. Effective programs make a concerted effort to work with parents as partners, empowering them to act in concert with other professionals on behalf of their child.

- Collaborate with a variety of caregivers.

With the efficacy of multi-component treatment, students with behavioral disorders may be receiving services from a variety of caregivers from diverse professional backgrounds or agencies—educators, psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, vocational counselors, juvenile justice workers, etc. In addition, students with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties often experience special health problems, personal or family substance abuse, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, etc. that also need to be addressed. Collaboration and coordination of school, social services, mental health and other community resources have produced promising results.

- Employ schoolwide approaches involving both general and special educators.

Effective programs realize the need for special education and regular education to cooperate in developing strategies to meet the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students, including those identified as behaviorally disordered. To accomplish this collaboration, special educators are serving in a broader change agent role rather than solely providing direct services to a relatively small percentage of students whose problems are most severe. In this change agent role, special educators can offer their expertise on effective behavioral interventions, influence the attention and commitment of regular educators to embrace a broader array of student outcomes which include personal and social competence, and facilitate the school's commitment and preparedness to plan and deliver positively oriented curricula, instruction, and other support services.

- Engage in planful staff development for school improvement.

There is no "quick fix" to school improvement. While we might like to believe that a three-hour inservice session will solve all problems, school improvement takes time. Effective schools mobilize change efforts through awareness and self-assessment. With a clear and shared focus, they commit to long-range sustained efforts which include training, development, and implementation over several years. For implementation to be successful the school must adapt the innovation to local circumstances.

Effective schools sustain improvement efforts through strong administrative leadership, teacher efficacy—positive beliefs about their ability to bring about student change, and collegiality—the process by which staff work effectively together toward a common goal.

- Conduct ongoing program evaluation.

In effective schools, evaluation provides support for professional and programmatic growth and development. Monitoring whether interventions are being carried out as planned and whether the interventions are having the intended effect is essential for making effective decisions. In addition, monitoring and evaluating sustains efforts by sending a clear signal that plans are to be carried out and results are expected. Finally, program evaluation permits acknowledgment of accomplishments, reinforcing efforts.

Achieving a positive school climate capable of meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students, including those who are behaviorally disordered, requires a vision—a vision of an inclusive and invitational school committed to reaching *all* students. This kind of school communicates a high expectancy for success, establishes firm and clear behavioral limits, and provides for student behavioral success by proactively teaching responsibility in a systematic and positive way. This school is unified with parents and the community, who together can achieve the goals of assuring both academic and social competence for all students.

Figure 2

What We Want To Achieve:
Characteristics of Schools
That Effectively Meet Student Behavioral Needs

Effective programs and schools:

Attitudes

- Have an unconditionally positive regard for students.
- Maintain a positive and proactive focus.
- Assert beliefs of responsibility and self-efficacy.
- Affirm high, success-oriented student expectations.

Skills

- Match instruction and services to individual student needs.
- Employ a proactive curricula.
- Use validated instructional strategies.
- Provide systematic and data-based interventions.
- Are supported by strong leaders.

Systems

- Provide an array of services.
- Engage parents.
- Collaborate with a variety of caregivers.
- Employ a schoolwide approach, involving both general and special educators.
- Engage in planful staff development for school improvement.
- Conduct ongoing program evaluation.

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What is the Iowa Behavioral Initiative?

Mission and Goals

The Iowa Behavioral Initiative (IBI) is a comprehensive staff development venture funded by the Bureau of Special Education, Iowa Department of Education on behalf of *all* Iowa students. It was established to improve the capacities of schools to meet the diverse and increasingly complex social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. Stated simply, the Iowa Behavioral Initiative assists educators in developing the *attitudes, skills,* and *systems* necessary to ensure that each student leaves public education with social competence appropriate to the individual regardless of ability or disability. The broad goals of the Initiative are to:

- Recognize exemplary personnel, services, programs, or schools that effectively meet student social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Improve the willingness among educators to accommodate the individual behavioral needs of *all* students.
- Extend the range and quality of services available to students, ensuring that they achieve positive social, emotional, and behavioral skills necessary for life success.
- Provide educators with validated strategies for responding to challenging behavior and proactively teach social competence.
- Strengthen the expertise of educators to be leaders in coordinating family and community resources on behalf of students with complex behavioral needs.

- Support systems level changes that enable schools to develop the social and emotional competence of their students.

The IBI includes *all* children with unmet needs from mild to severe behavioral disorders, and spans the continuum of educational services from general education to extensive specialized instructional settings. This initiative provides the opportunity for special educators to join hands with regular educators, blending systems and strengths to create a broader range of both prevention and intervention services.

The focus of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative is on developing positively oriented and proactive curricula and services to create more inclusive and invitational school climates. It is designed to impact local commitment to meeting behavioral needs by increasing the expertise at the school or district and community level and empowering those who work directly with students.

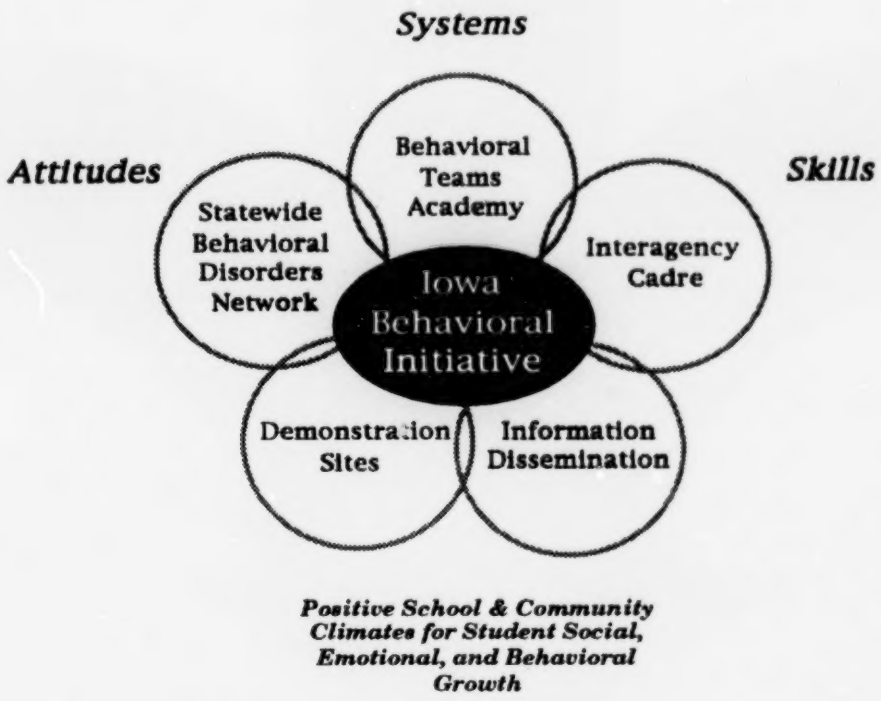
The professional development activities of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative were designed to be responsive to the state's identified issues and concerns summarized in Figure 1. All IBI activities will be thematically linked to build toward the goal of creating positive school climates and an improved range and quality of services available to students. Project activities will utilize methods which provide for continuous and diverse process-oriented change and will include comprehensive training of local teams, technical assistance, summer institutes, statewide behavioral disorders networking, interagency collaboration, and the development of demonstration sites and products. Figure 3 depicts this mission and the five major components of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative.

These five components together represent activities which will address the issues and concerns identified in Figure 1. They are designed to impact attitudes, skills and systems to improve the way schools respond to student behavioral difficulties. Access to some of the IBI components and activities occurred through a site application process. Other activities are open to selective participation by any interested educator. A description of these components and their goals follows.

Behavioral Teams Academy

The *Behavioral Teams Academy* is an important component for achieving the broadest mission of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative—school staff with the attitudes and skills to proactively and positively address student behavioral needs schoolwide. This component builds a joint commitment by general and special educators to tackle the issues and concerns of students

Figure 3
Components of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative



with behavioral difficulties in the regular classroom. The issues and concerns addressed by the *Behavioral Teams Academy* are represented on the left side of the continuum in Figure 1.

The Academy is designed to enhance local expertise and encourage problem-solving which allows school teams to selectively build program elements based on their unique needs. Through the *Behavioral Teams Academy* local teams: (1) expand attitudes and beliefs about the school's role in meeting student behavioral needs, (2) extend their knowledge of best practices and validated strategies for working with challenging students, (3) serve as leaders for the development and implementation of effective practices within their building or locale, and (4) create a structure for continual exchange of information and the

sharing of successful practices with other educators and Academy team members.

Six local teams have been selected for membership in the Academy through a site application process. These local teams participate in two years of regularly scheduled training and development sessions. The content collectively covers the essential elements of schools for creating environments that are responsive to student behavioral needs.

Each Academy team is comprised of approximately six members, each selected for their contribution to the collaboration, planning, and decision-making processes necessary for local implementation and building-level change. This team includes the required membership of a building administrator, special educator, and general educator. These *required* team members generally come from the site of implementation—a local school. Additional team members considered highly *desirable* include a support service provider, someone with responsibility for, or knowledge of, staff development, and a teacher trainer from an institute of higher education. These team members come from the local school or a sponsoring site such as the district or AEA. Additional building staff (e.g., a transportation supervisor, school nurse, coach, etc.) or parents have also been asked to join this core team for selected activities.

While the configuration of the teams varies with the individual needs of each site, they have one thing in common—they represent local educators who are open to new and innovative ways of dealing with problems. Each team member: (1) is considered a master educator, (2) has a desire to work collaboratively with other staff, (3) demonstrates appropriate communication and interpersonal skills to facilitate effective teaming, and (4) is able to lead others to learn effective strategies through modeling, consultation, or training.

Academy workshops and technical assistance activities are conducted by Iowa "experts" as well as a "national faculty." The goal is to provide practical strategies based upon best practice. Topics include exemplary practices in screening and assessment, schoolwide discipline planning, monitoring of behavioral progress, teaching social skills, classroom behavior management, transportation and discipline, crisis interventions, student motivation, transition planning, or interagency collaboration. In addition, process skills such as consultation, facilitation, and collaboration, vital to the leadership role of the team, are also included. Participants are provided with sufficient time and support to assimilate new

knowledge and skills, and receive follow-up and assistance to guide planning for local implementation.

The opportunities extended to the teams include:

- Participation in regularly scheduled workshops and seminars lead by local and nationally known presenters.
- Full stipends to cover expenses for up to six team members to participate in the Academy activities. This includes substitute teacher costs.
- Resource materials to supplement the training and to support site development and implementation.
- Opportunities to network, problem-solve, and share successes, resources, and effective strategies with other IBI teams.
- Availability of IBI staff and national "experts" for consultation and technical assistance in local development and implementation efforts.

The commitments by the sponsoring site (district or AEA) include:

- 16-18 days of release time throughout the year for team members to participate in training and development activities.
- 5-10 days of additional release time for the team to engage in local planning and implementation activities.
- Additional resources as locally indicated to support site development.

Expectations for the Team include:

- Participation in all *Behavioral Teams Academy* activities during the year.
- Implementation of the skills learned through the Academy throughout the year.
- Development of a plan for conveying information acquired through inservice, individual consultation, etc., including a long-term plan for local site development.

While formal participation in the academy concludes after year two, it is anticipated that these teams will continue to function as local agents of change. "Graduating" teams may selectively access ongoing Initiative activities for their continued professional growth. Some sites may choose to apply for demonstration site status and continue their efforts to improve behavioral services to students through those IBI supported activities. (See *Demonstration Sites.*)

Six sites joined the Behavioral Teams Academy for two years beginning in the fall of 1994. Six additional sites may be selected to begin a two-year participation cycle in 1995.

Initial selection of the Academy sites occured through a review of site applications. A selection panel of practicioners from across the state conducted this first level selection. The field was then narrowed to six sites through observations and interviews with the applying school teams. These site observations were conducted by project staff who assessed the site's interest and commitment to innovation and change. Recommendations were made to the Department of Education for final site selection.

Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network

The *Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network* is designed to address the ongoing inservice needs of special educators and support staff who work each day with students identified as behaviorally disordered. Serving students with moderate to severe behavioral disorders can be challenging at best as the high rate of attrition among these educators suggests. The activities of the *Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network* are designed to be responsive to the unique needs of these special educators. (See Figure 1.)

The goals of the *Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network* are: (1) to increase communication and professional exchange among special educators serving students with challenging behaviors, and (2) to improve the range and quality of services to students with more moderate to severe behavioral needs. The Network hopes to support efforts of direct service providers and reduce attrition through the dissemination of information on validated instructional materials, practices and program models and the provision of ongoing technical assistance and collegial support. The Network also hopes to provide opportunities for teachers who are provisionally certified to meet state certification requirements through seminars and workshops offered for college credit.

Activities of the *Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network* might include summer institutes, retreats, distance learning, electronic networking, consultation and technical assistance, or an interventions conference. Minigrants will also be available to encourage professionals to develop products or strategies for dissemination to peers.

Selected Academy sites identify staff to be included in the

Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network. However, participation is not limited to those sites. Any special educator interested in networking for professional development may be a part of the Network's activities as space permits.

Strengthening the capabilities of this talented group of special educators will increase the availability of local technical assistance. Of course the ultimate goal of the *Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network* is to ensure that Iowa students with behavioral disorders receive the most appropriate and effective services possible in the least restrictive environment.

The *Statewide Behavioral Disorders Network* will initiate activities during the 1994-95 school year.

Interagency Cadre

The *Interagency Cadre* is designed to tackle the complicated systems issues in coordinating services for children with behavioral difficulties across multiple agencies. These issues are represented on the right side of the continuum in Figure 1. Educators know that student personal and social problems cannot be overcome by changing school services, environments, curricula, and teaching strategies alone. Clearly, the solutions to meeting the complex behavioral needs of children will not be found in any one agency. The goal of the *Interagency Cadre* is to overcome the obstacles to service provision, and to establish collaborative relationships and joint agreements with community agencies in support of school and home efforts to effectively meet complex student needs.

Each *Behavioral Teams Academy* site has identified two interagency *liaisons.* These liaisons provide both direct service and consultative functions. As a part of their direct service responsibilities they are charged with facilitating local interagency planning and service coordination on behalf of identified children and their families. This includes assessing the service needs of a child and family, providing a mechanism for case management to guide them toward the right mix of services, and ensuring planful communication among those services or agencies and families. By wrapping services from various agencies around the child and family, liaisons help to change the system one student at a time. On a larger scale, the interagency liaisons are catalysts for change and are responsible for creating lasting interagency agreements and structures for broad-based systems change.

The interagency liaisons are professionals with effective inter-

personal skills, a commitment to collaboration, and knowledge of various agencies and their services. Each Academy site has one liaison from the education setting—the building, district, or AEA. The second liaison is from a local community agency—mental health. social services, juvenile justice, etc. Collectively, the IBI liaisons from across the sites represent all child-serving agencies. This full agency representation increases group strength in tackling complicated service issues that sometimes cross agency lines.

These interagency liaisons from the Academy teams are joined by other professionals from across the state who provide similar service coordination roles to form the *Interagency Cadre.* The Cadre is networked for regular sharing and communication, and comes together periodically to participate in focused training, joint problem-solving, and coordinated efforts to impact statewide policies, guidelines or structures which will allow local collaboration to flourish across the state. Focused training activities for the Cadre include information on various agency roles, eligibility, and services, and strategies for collaboration, case management, or parent empowerment. Both a local and a "national faculty" provide training and technical assistance to the *Interagency Cadre.*

The Iowa Behavioral Initiative financially supports the participation of the interagency liaisons from the selected sites through stipends and partial salary compensation. The IBI invites others who serve in similar interagency coordination capacities to join the Cadre activities at their agency's expense.

The Behavioral Teams Academy interagency liaisons receive:

- Technical assistance from project staff to build or extend local service coordination activities.
- Opportunities for focused professional development by national "experts" through the *Interagency Cadre.*
- Full stipends to cover expenses associated with the Cadre activities.
- Resources and materials to assist with activities.
- The opportunity to join others in the development of practices to impact statewide interagency collaboration efforts.
- The sponsoring agency will receive partial salary compensation for the non-school or community agency liaison in the amount of $10,000.

The requirements of the sponsoring agency include:

- Commitment to the interagency liaison positions for a minimum two-year period.
- Consideration of and provisions for continuing services of the liaisons beyond the two-year IBI commitment if an impact is demonstrated.
- 15-20 days of release time for the liaisons to participate in focused training, problem-solving, and strategic planning activities with the *Interagency Cadre.*

Demonstration Sites

Some educators understand the issues surrounding behavior problems in our schools but lack a vision of how to operationalize effective solutions. There is a need for model programs, services and schools. To address this need, the Iowa Behavioral Initiative has identified and supports *Demonstration Sites* that show an outstanding level of competence and dedication in educating students with behavioral disorders or addressing the personal and social needs of *all* students.

The purpose for establishing IBI *Demonstration Sites* is twofold: (1) to develop and disseminate effective, replicable educational systems, practices, and curricula and (2) to provide incentives for and recognition of staff efforts to create exemplary practices. *Demonstration Sites* provide leadership and encouragement to others, clearly showing that we can provide learning opportunities for students with behavioral problems in the least restrictive environment that help them to become literate, well-adjusted, productive and responsible citizens.

IBI *Demonstration Sites* span the entire spectrum of services available to students. Sites may demonstrate a particular element of an effective school (e.g., screening and assessment, prevention and early intervention strategies, schoolwide discipline planning, alternative approaches to suspension, interagency coordination, social skills instruction, etc.) or a comprehensive system or package of effective services. Sites represent preschool, elementary, and secondary programs, as well as all levels of the full continuum of services—from general education to extensive specialized and multi-agency services. They encompass both rural and urban settings, and are geographically scattered to ensure accessibility for observation by, or the provision of assistance to, any interested educator.

While the *Demonstration Sites* serve as models of exemplary attitudes, skills, and systems as outlined here, it is anticipated that they will evolve—that is, become actively involved in ongoing development activities to modify, improve, or extend the quality and range of their services. The critical characteristic of these selected sites is not so much a *complete or perfected* design of service delivery as it is a *commitment* to creatively using validated practices and systems, and *demonstrated success in* solving problems and helping students achieve a more satisfactory adjustment to school, home, and community.

Each *Demonstration Site* receives:

- "Seed money" for continued development activities or the production of training or instructional materials to be shared with others.
- Consultation and technical assistance from project staff and the "national faculty" to assist with further program development.
- Assistance in evaluating and reporting the impact of their practices.
- Selective participation in various IBI staff development activities to meet their unique ongoing development needs.
- Opportunities to exchange ideas and receive recognition through networking activities, conference presentations, publications, and assistance to the IBI with training and development activities for other sites.

The *Demonstration Site* in turn is:

- Committed to the beliefs and goals of the IBI.
- Committed to serve as a demonstration site for a minimum of two years.
- Committed to well planned, ongoing development activities that serve to maintain and continually improve the school and services.
- Encouraging staff to develop products for dissemination statewide.
- Providing access by interested professionals to observe the school or program.

Information Dissemination

The *Information Dissemination* component of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative encompasses many activities that serve to pull together the various efforts of the project and provide information to all interested educators. The activities of this

component will: (1) build a broad awareness of the initiative's goals and activities and challenge educators to rethink current practices, (2) provide a forum for recognition and sharing of exemplary efforts, (3) develop products to support and facilitate school efforts, and (4) assess the impact of activities, validate practices, and share those results with others.

One tool for information exchange will be a statewide newsletter dedicated to the education of students with behavioral difficulties. This newsletter will bring up-to-date information to educators on all project activities and professional development opportunities. It will also review exemplary practices, spotlight demonstration sites or other successful services across the state, feature IBI products, and address questions or issues that arise in the daily challenges of educating troubled and troublesome students.

Teachers and parents have asked for "user-friendly" information on validated behavioral strategies. Technical assistance papers will be developed on practical school or home interventions. Additional materials to support the various professional development activities will also be prepared and broadly shared.

A critical function of the *Information Dissemination* component is to provide knowledge of results. Innovation is sustained when information about the impact of efforts is widely known. Project staff, with the assistance of other higher education and AEA professionals, will systematically evaluate the Initiative through both process and outcome variables.

The effectiveness of the IBI will be assessed by reviewing the accomplishment of project activities, quality indicators, social validation, and consumer satisfaction. Perhaps more importantly, the impact of the Initiative activities on students, school staff, and the building climate will also be assessed. Data collected prior to participating in site activities and again at intervals throughout the participation and development process will provide useful information about the impact of those activities.

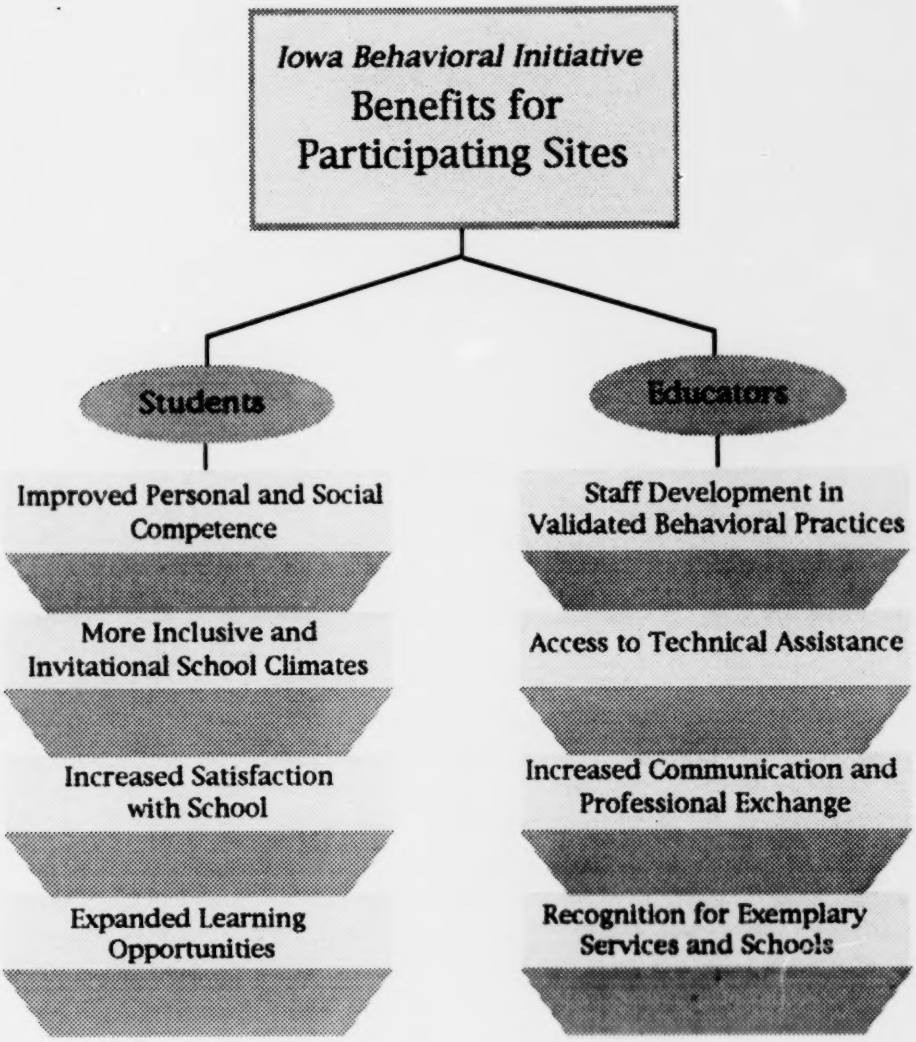
Each Behavioral Teams Academy site identifies someone to assist with data gathering. This information collection is, whenever possible, based on existing data bases such as attendance, suspensions, drop-outs, discipline referrals, special education placements or exits, etc., so as not to place excessive burdens on personnel at the sites. Through assessment of impact, strategies and interventions are evaluated and validated

to determine the best processes for change.

A symposium focusing on behavior in Iowa schools was held in September 1994 to kick off the activities of the *Iowa Behavioral Initiative.* School teams, parents, and other professionals learned about the IBI vision, engaged in self-assessment and local planning leading to improved services for, and responses to, students with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. Subsequent conferences will offer a forum to highlight progress toward the mission, provide opportunities for those who have developed successful practices to share and learn from others, and rally together for continued efforts.

Summary

Meeting the personal and social needs of *all* students is a difficult challenge—but one with positive results for students, educators, and families alike. The five components of the *Iowa Behavioral Initiative* are created to support schools and families with this endeavor. As in any challenge, there can be great satisfaction when it is done well. The IBI offers the leadership, the resources, and the belief that the challenges are worth the efforts.


Iowa Behavioral Initiative
Benefits for Participating Sites
Students
Improved Personal and Social Competence
More Inclusive and Invitational School Climates
Increased Satisfaction with School
Expanded Learning Opportunities
Educators
Staff Development in Validated Behavioral Practices
Access to Technical Assistance
Increased Communication and Professional Exchange
Recognition for Exemplary Services and Schools

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